

*The RIGHT WAY of obtaining a Good
and Safe PEACE with our Enemies.*

Set forth in a

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SERMON

Preach'd in

Sandford CHURCH,

On the late

FAST-DAY,

January the 16th. 17¹¹₁₂.

By ROBERT HAM, M. A.

AND

Chaplain of the said Hamlet.

E X O N :

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S E R M O N,

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PROVERBS XVI. Chap. 7 Ver.

*When a Mans Ways please the Lord, he maketh
his very Enemies to be at Peace with him.*

I Could not think of any other Text of Holy Scripture, that (in my Apprehension) was more pertinent to the present Occasion, or fitter to be discours'd of at this Time, than that which I have now read unto you: Especially, if we consider, either our *present Wants*, or our *general Desires*; or would be instructed in the best Method of having our Desires *fulfilled*, and our Wants *supplied*: Or, indeed, to obtain whatever else is *necessary*, to our *present or future Happiness*.

First, As for our *present Wants*. Were it not for Method sake, it would be needless to tell you, (for you know as well as I) that we have been labouring, for several Years past, under *one of the greatest* of God's Judgments; mean, a Dangerous, a Bloody and Expensive WAR; which hath cost the *Lives of many Thousands*; exhausted our *Wealth and Riches*; and brought the Nation into such *traits and Difficulties*, as that it was scarce ever in greater, or the like.

We believe it to have been a *just War* on our part ; (I say on our part ; for it cannot be so on both sides) because *absolutely necessary* to defend our Selves and our Allies against the *boundless Ambition* of a proud Enemy, who hath long aim'd at an *Universal Monarchy*, and been endeavouring to enslave his *Neighbours*, as he hath done by his *own Subjects*. So that our *Lives, Liberties and Properties*, yea, and the *free Exercise of our Religion* ; (which ought to be dearer to us than our very *Lives*) have all been at stake, and in great Jeopardy.

Wherefore, we had very great Reason to engage *heartily* in this War ; and it must be acknowledg'd, to the praise of his Holy Name, that our great and good God hath bless'd us hitherto with *wonderful and unparalell'd Success* in it ; Granting us many such Victories as have been *astomishing to our Selves*, and will be *admired* by all future *Ages* that shall read the *Histories* of them.

However, it must be confess'd, that as the Enemy hath by these means been *greatly weakened*, and rendred *less formidable* : so we have also been at such Expence of *Men and Money*, that we are *brought low*, and stand in *need of Peace*.

Whether we are in as great Want thereof as the Enemy is, I will not take upon me to determine ; (tho' some say that He needs it most) but that we also are in need thereof, is too sensibly felt to be denied. Wherefore,

Secondly, As we are in want thereof, so I believe our general Desires are after the Blessing of Peace. Some few may possibly (for *Self-Ends*) wish for, and desire a Continuance of the War : But, I dare say, the Nation in General is otherwise minded ; and the far greater part do (in their Hearts) cry, *Peace, Peace* ; provided it may be had upon *safe and honourable Terms* ; such as will give us a probable Prospect of its Continuance to Us, and to our Posterity. For otherwise it must be agreed to be much better to struggle awhile longer with the greatest Difficulties, rather than to accept of such a Peace, as will leave us in visible Danger of a New War, (or some worse Calamity) after that the Enemy hath had a little Time to repair his Losses, and recruit his Strength.

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But (as I said before) if a safe and honourable Peace may be had, (about which there are Negotiations on foot at this time) I may venture to say, that it will be most agreeable to our General Desires.

And so indeed it ought to be: For when such a Peace may be had, War is no longer lawful; because *Self-defence* and *Self-preservation* (which include our *Rights* and *Liberties*, as well as our *Persons*) are the chief Ingredients that render it warrantable at any time.

Hence therefore it may be presumed, in the *Third Place*, That all those who are truly sensible of our Want of Peace, and join heartily in the Common Desires thereof, will be glad of Information concerning the best method of having their *Wants supplied*, and their *Desires* of the aforesaid Blessing *fulfilled*. That is to say, what they *are* and *ought* to do towards it.

Some (perhaps) may think, that this is none of their Business; that it doth not belong to them to do ought towards the Conclusion of the present War, and making of Peace with publick Enemies. For, as they are not *fit*, or *qualified*, for such a Work; so are they in no *Place* or *Station* for it. But it must be left wholly to *Her Majesty*, and to the *Wisdom* of her *Council*, and *Plenipotentiaries*.

And so (in truth) it ought to be as to the *Management of Treaties*, and other Transactions about it. But, however, if any think that they have nothing to do in this Grand Affair, that they are as Persons wholly unconcerned therein, (I mean not in point of *Interest*, but in point of *Duty*) and that it is not in them (if they would) to further, or hinder, the Establishment of that *Peace*, which is so much *wanted*, and so generally *desired*; if any (I say) think thus, they are greatly mistaken; and do not think aright, either of the *true Original of War*, or of what is conducing to the Procurement of *Peace*.

For, as 'tis plainly taught us in the sacred Writings, That *Wars* and *Fightings* come (Originally) from those *Lusts which war in our Members*, James 4. 1. And also that these are one of God's Judgments upon us for our Sins, as being permitted, or directed, by Divine Providence, in a Way of Punish-

Punishment for our Disobedience : So, on the other hand, the Blessing of *Peace* is certainly attainable by (because promised to) Repentance and Reformation.

And, if this be so, you must needs own, (for it is a plain Consequence thereof) that (unless we can think that we have no Sins to be repented of, nor any thing in us which wants Amendment) we have all of us a part to bear in this great Work : That is, to be plain, in finishing the *present War*, and towards the procurement of a *good and safe Peace*.

Now, that this most certainly is so, and what it is that we are to do towards the Attainment of the last mentioned Ends, is what we are taught in and by the Words of my Text, viz. *When a Man's Ways please the Lord, he maketh even his Enemies to be at Peace with him.*

This (I confess) is spoken of private Enmity, and with respect to particular Persons : But it is every whit as true of Nations and Kingdoms ; For the Reason of the Thing is the same. And it might as well be said thus : ' When the Ways of any Nation or Kingdom do please the Lord, he maketh ' (or will make) their Enemies to be at Peace with them.

By which you may plainly see and perceive, that every one of us (as we are Parts of the Community) have something to do ; as also what it is that we are to do, that the Plague of *War* may be removed from our Land and Nation, and that the Blessing of *Peace* may be obtained by us, ay ! and continued to us ; and that the present Negotiations to that End may not be frustrated.

Now, without dividing the Words into Parts, we may observe from them these Two

DOCTRINAL PROPOSITIONS.

- I. *That when a Nation or People are in War, (i.e. with a Neighbour People, or Nation) it is God that must be the Peace-maker ; and is so when ever Peace is made.*
- II. *That if a Nation, or People, are in want, and desirous of Peace with their Enemies ; the Right Way of obtaining it, is, by making their own Ways pleasing unto the Lord.*

I shall speak but briefly of the *First* of these two Points, that I may have a little the more Time for the *Second*.

I. *When a Nation or People are in War with a Neighbour People, or Nation, God must be the Peace-maker; and is so when ever Peace is made and concluded.*

This is grounded on the latter Clause of my Text, as the *Second Proposition* is on the former. Nevertheless this seems it to be first treated of; because, if we are once truly convinced that God is the *principal Agent* in Peace-making, we shall be (or at least ought, in all Reason, to be) the more attentive to what may be said of the Right Way of prevailing with him (*i. e.* with God) to take this Work in hand, and to gratify our Desires of Peace.

Here then my Method shall be:

1. To prove the *Truth* of the Proposition.
2. To shew, *by what means*, or *in what manner*, God is wont to make Peace between Nations that are in War.
3. To conclude this Point with a very few Words of *Application*.

1. I am to prove, *That when a Nation or People are (or have been) in War, God must be the Peace-maker; and is so when ever Peace is made.*

For the Proof of this we have plain Scripture Evidence, which is the best that can be given or expected by *Christians*, in a Case of this Nature; For when we speak of God, or of his Works, it is the safest Way to be guided by his Holy Word: Because, if we speak according thereunto, we are sure of speaking according to truth.

Now, thus saith God himself to Cyrus, (an Heathen King) whom he rais'd up to be an Instrument of much Good to his Church, *Isaiah 45. 5, 6, 7. I am the Lord; and there is none else; there is no God besides me: I girded thee, tho' thou hast not known me. That they may know me from the Rising of the Sun, and from the West, that there is none besides me; I am the Lord, and there is none else.*

Observe

Observe next what follows concerning the Works of God : *I form the Light, and create Darknes : I make Peace, & create Evil : I the Lord do all these things.* One of which things (as you plainly see, or hear) is the making of Peace. *I the Lord do this thing, whenever 'tis done.*

To the like purpose, the People of God are taught to say, Ch. 26. v. 12. *Lord, thou wilt ordain Peace for us : For thou also hast wrought all our Works in us ;* (or rather for us, as it is in some Margnis.) Which latter Words are a Reason of the former Assertion, viz. That God must ordain Peace for us, if it be ever had and enjoyed ; because, he it is that *worketh all our Works* for us. And, if *all*, then surely this in particular. For which Reason, the *Psalmist* exhorteth the *Jewish Church* to praise God for this very Blessing, saying : *Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem, praise thy God, O Zion ;* Psa. 147. 12, 13, 14. Observe now the Reasons of this Exhortation, which you have in the next words, viz. *For he hath strengthened the Bars of thy Gates ; he hath blessed thy Children within thee : Yea, he it is that maketh Peace in thy Borders ; and filleth thee with the finest of the Wheat.* Here again God is said to be the *Peace-maker* ; and that's the Reason why the *Psalmist* exhorted the *Jewish Church* to praise God, in a time when they enjoyed Peace : After their having been harass'd with long and dangerous Wars ; as 'tis well known that they were, before they were peaceably settled in the Land of Canaan. And (as it is said, *Josh. 23. 1.*) *they had Rest from all their Enemies round about.* Which Rest, being the same with Peace, is there also said to be God's Gift to them. But, to name only one Text more ; hear what is said, Psa. 46. 8, 9. *Come, (says the Psalmist) behold the Works of the Lord, what Desolations he hath made in the Earth,* (i. e. during the Time of War, which is a desolating Time) But now the Case was alter'd ; for it follows there, *He maketh Wars to cease unto the End of the Earth ;* (i. e. the same God doth this) *He breaketh the Bow, and cutteth the Spear in sunder ; He burneth the Chariot in the Fire.* The meaning whereof is, that he maketh Peace.

For when the Instruments of War are marr'd, and thrown aside, Peace follows of course: In the making whereof, (if you believe what is said in these, and many other like Texts that might be quoted) you must believe likewise that God hath a principal Hand, and is the Giver of the Blessing of Peace, whenever it is enjoy'd by any people that have been in want thereof. Wherefore,

2. Let us hear next, *by what means, or in what manner*, God is wont to make Peace between Nations that are (or have been) in War. This he doth Two Ways.

1st, By weakning their Power and Strength; and so making them weary of War, and desirous of Peace: By giving such Victories to one of the Contending Parties over the other, as shall cause the *Beaten Party* to seek and sue for Peace. Which Victories having likewise cost the *Conquerors* dear, and rendred them less able to keep up the Contest much longer, (which may be our own present Case) will make them see that it is their Interest to grant Peace to such as sue for it; provided (as I said before) that it may be done upon *safe and honourable Terms*, with respect to Futurity: For otherwise, it cannot be their Interest so to do.

Now, that God is the *Author* and *Donor* of such Victories, hath been often shewn on past *Thanksgiving-Days*; and therefore needeth not to be proved again at this time, otherwise than by quoting what is said in a Text or two: As in 2 *Sam.* 22. 38, 39, 40. Which Chapter (as you may see in the first Verse thereof) contains a *Song*, or *Psalms*, of *Thanksgiving*, which *David* spake in the Day that the Lord had delivered him out of the Hand of all his Enemies; and out of the Hand of *Saul*, who had been the Chief of them.

Now take Notice of what he saith in the afore-quoted Verses: *I have pursued mine Enemies*, (saith he) *and destroyed them; and turned not again, until I had consumed them. I have consumed them, and wounded them that they could not arise; yea, they are fallen under my Feet.*

But you will be apt to say, or think, *What's this to the present Purpose?* For *David* speaks here of his own warlike Exploits in such manner, as if he were extolling himself, and not praising or thanking God. Hear therefore his next

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words, which are a plain Acknowledgment of God's Hand in these Victories; and that they were obtain'd, not by his own, but by that Power and Strength which God gave him. His words are these: *For thou hast girded me with Strength to the Battle: Them that rose up against me, hast thou subdued under me.*

Therefore David saith again, Psal. 144. 1. *Blessed be the Lord my Strength, which teacheth (or helpeth) my Hands to war, and my Fingers to fight.* And Verse the 10th, he saith expressly, *That it is God who giveth Salvation (or Victory; as it is in some Margins) unto Kings: who delivereth David his Servant from the hurtful Sword.*

So then; it ought to be believed by us, That whenever Nations are at War, and the one obtaineth the Victory (or many Victories) over the other, God is the *Donor* of them.

And by such Means it is, (as I said before) that he many times causeth *War* to cease, and *Peace* to follow. For great Losses are wont to make Nations, as well as private Men, more *humble* and *treatable* than they were before. These bring down their proud and haughty Minds; and Humility makes them more willing to put an End to the War.

And, God doth likewise make *Peace*, by inclining Mens Hearts thereunto: By over-ruling their Spirits, and bending them to a more peaceable Disposition than they have been of in time past.

Of God's Power over the Spirits and Hearts of Men, to turn and incline them (contrary to their former Purposes and Practices) even as he sees fit, we have many Examples in the sacred Writings: But I shall take Notice of Two only at present. The first is that of *Esau*, (whereof we read in *Genesis*, Chapters 32, 33.) who came out against his Brother *Jacob*, full of Wrath and Fury, with 400 Men at his Heels, to destroy him: But *Jacob*, foreseeing his Danger, made earnest Supplication to God for *Deliverance from the Hand of his Brother Esau*, Ch. 32. v. 11. Whereupon, (as you will find in the sequel of the Story) God so changed the Heart and Mind of *Esau*, that when he met his Brother *Jacob*, (instead of doing him, or his, the least Hurt) he only *embraced him, and fell on his Neck, and kissed him,*

him, Ch. 33. v. 4. And so parted from him in Love, and with great Kindness.

Another such Instance is that of the *Egyptians*, who had a mortal Hatred against the *Israelites*: Yet, when they were about to march out of *Egypt*, God gave the said People such Favour in the fight of the *Egyptians*, (and so inclined their Hearts) that *they lent the Israelites Jewels of Silver, and Jewels of Gold, and Raiment, and all such things as they required of them*, Exod. 12. 35, 36.

And, as these two Examples shew God's Power over the Hearts and Spirits of Men, in general; to turn and incline them which way it pleaseth him; to turn their Hatred into Love, their Unkindness into Kindness: So to like purpose it is said, (Prov. 21. 1.) That *the Kings Heart* (i. e. the Heart of every King upon Earth) *is in the Hand* (or, as that word often signifies, is in the Power) *of the Lord*: And, *as the Rivers of Water*, (are turned by Man's Art and Labour) *so he turneth it whithersoever he will*: i. e. (to keep close to the Metaphor) Either to *War*, or *Peace*. To the one, only by suffering him to follow his own Will and Lusts, if he be of an ambitious and contentious Spirit: To the other, by laying a Restraint upon his Will, and inclining him to be of a better Mind. Which the great God, who is *the Father* (and therefore the Commander) *of Spirits*, Heb. 12. 9. can easily do, without any Labour or Trouble, but only by saying, *So be it*.

When, therefore, the Heart of a King (or any other) is turned and changed from a Purpose of War, to a Desire of Peace; and from delighting in Contention, to seeking after Terms of Accommodation: This we ought to look upon as God's Handy-work; provided always (and as I mean) if this Change be real, and not in Semblance only. For God hath no hand, otherwise than by bare permission, in any Dealings that are feigned and hypocritical. But, as I said before, if it be a real Change of the Mind, and it hath its proper Effect, (i. e. if Peace and Concord follow) God is the Peace-maker. And this is one other Means, by which he doth sometimes make Peace. Now

For *Application* of what hath been said of this first Point: We may learn hence, to whom we ought to *look* and *seek* for Peace in our present want thereof; even unto God, who is the great Peace-maker of the World: And whenever it is effected, it is principally of his doing.

True it is, that God doth not always work Miracles; but maketh use of Means and Instruments, in carrying on and perfecting this, as well as other of his Works. And therefore, in all such ordinary Cases, Men must use their own Endeavours, and seek and expect God's Blessing upon them; without which they will ever be ineffectual.

Consequently, as there are Men of Wisdom and Experience now employed, by *Her Majesty* and her *Allies*, to treat of Peace with the Enemy; so it is *our Part* and *Duty*, (yea, and our *Interest* also, if we desire Peace) to help them with our *Prayers*; and to beseech the *God of Heaven* to be their Counsellor and Director, and to *bless* their present Undertaking; so that they may not do or conclude any thing to our *Prejudice*; but such things only as are, and will continue to be, for the *Common Good*. Thus may we (every one of us) assist and advise our *Plenipotentiaries*, tho' we are at a great Distance from them, by *Praying* to God, who is every where present, and *Engaging* Him, who heareth the Prayers of his People, to be their *Guide*, and to *direct* and *over-rule* all their Consultations; so as that the Issue of them (whether it be a *speedy Peace*, or a *longer War*) may be for *God's Glory* and his *Church's Good*, in the End: That, if *Peace* be concluded, it may be a *safe* one for *Us* and our *Allies*; and, if *War* be continued, it may be a *prosperous* one for *us* and *them*, 'till such a Peace may be had.

But it may be ask'd, *whether this* (I mean *Praying* to God in the aforesaid manner) *be all that we are to do in the present Case, and to the aforesaid End?* No, surely: There is another Thing (which is Comprehensive of many *Duties*) that we ought likewise to do and perform, if we desire the *Blessing* of *Peace*, and to be rid of the *Judgments* of *War*.

What this is, we are taught in the First Clause of my *Text*, on which the

II Point of DOCTRINE is grounded: viz.

That if a Nation, or People are in want, and desirous of Peace with their Enemies; the Right Way of obtaining it, is by making their own Ways pleasing unto the Lord.

Which thing is the more needful to be done, because otherwise we have no Reason to hope, or expect, that our Prayers for Peace will be heard or regarded.

Here my Method shall be:

1. To explain and shew, what is meant by our Ways.
2. What is required to the Making our Ways pleasing unto God.
3. That our So Doing is the most effectual Course to obtain Peace (yea, a safe Peace) with our Enemies.
4. For what other special Reasons we should endeavour to make all our Ways pleasing unto God. And then
5. To conclude with Application.

First, I am to explain and shew what is meant by our Ways.

Now, a Man's Ways are his common Course of Life, and Manner of Behaviour in the Sight of God: His usual and customary Practice: This, in *Scripture Stile*, is a Man's Way. Therefore, if a Man do (commonly and frequently) that which is Evil and Sinful, he is said to go in an evil Way: If he do that which is Good and Fit to be done, he is said to walk in a Good Way, and in a Right Path.

Hence we read, *Psa. i. v. 1.* of the Way of Sinners; and in the 6th v. of the Way of the Righteous; and in other Texts to like purpose: Which shew, that a Man's Ways are his Deeds and Actions.

But then, considering that there are the Ways of a Man's Heart, and of his Tongue likewise, as well as of the Hand, (which is the chief Instrument of Action.) therefore, the Thoughts of his Heart and his Words and Speeches, as well

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as his *Doings*, are to be look'd upon as comprehended under this *Phrase*. For God hath Regard to each of these, and will call us to Account for all of them : Wherefore we ought to *think, speak and do* in such manner, as that God may be pleas'd, and not offended, with any of our *Thoughts*, [I mean not this, of our *sudden* Thoughts, which we cannot prevent ; but of such as are *fix't, settl'd* and *allow'd* of by our Minds] or with any of our *VVords* and *Actions*, over which we have a greater Power and Command, and according to our different Care of them, may be either good or bad.

Secondly. The next thing to be done is, *To shew what is required to the making of these our Ways pleasing unto God.*

Now, the General Answer to this Enquiry, is, To make them conformable to the *Will and Law of God*; consonant to the *Dictates of right Reason*, (which is the *Law of God* written on our *Hearts*) and to the *Rules and Directions* of *Holy Scripture*, which contains the *Revealed Will* of God.

By these two Ways doth *Almighty God* make known unto us, his *Mind and Will*, and in what manner we ought to behave our selves before him, so as that he may take Delight in us. Consequently, and in order thereunto, we should make all our *aforsaid Ways* conformable unto his *righteous VVill*, so manifested unto us. But, more particularly,

[1.] We should labour after *Purity of Heart* and *Thought*; after *Cleaness of Desire* and *Intention*. Our Minds should not be suffer'd to take Pleasure in *filthy Objects*, or to approve of any thing that is contrary to *Piety* and *Virtue*; Nothing should be permitted to rest quietly therein, but what is agreeable to *Holiness*. That this is a Part of the *VVill of God*, and what we ought therefore to take Heed unto, appears from that which he saith : *Jer. 4. 14. How long shall thy vain Thoughts lodge within thee?* And again, by that which is said, *Mat. 5. 8. Blessed are the Pure in Heart; for they shall see God.*

If therefore Evil Thoughts and Sinful Desires do, at any time enter into, or arise out of, our Hearts, we ought to oppose them, and to lay them aside, with all the Speed we can.

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And we ought to be more especially careful, that we do not form to our selves any wicked Designs or ungodly Purposes : That we do not plot and contrive Mischief or any unlawful Action : That we do not consent to, or approve of, the evil Deeds and sinful Imaginations of others : That if any thing that is filthy and impure be presented to our Minds, we do not give it Harbour or Entertainment, but cast it out, with Abhorrence and Detestation. And, on the contrary, we should entertain such Thoughts as are pure and holy, and take Delight in them : All our Purposes and Intentions should be upright ; and our chief Desires should be after an Increase of Grace, and that which is according to Holiness. So shall we take the Right Course to *make the Ways of our Hearts pleasing unto God*, who is the Searcher of our Hearts, and a God of infinite Purity and Holiness.

[2] We should likewise labour after a *right Government of our Tongues* : To keep a *strict VVatch* over them, that they may not utter any thing that is *impious and wicked*. We should beware (in particular) of *Lying, Slandering and Backbiting* ; of *profane Swearing and Cursing* ; of all sorts of *beastly Talk and filthy Discourse* ; of every kind of *Evil-speaking* ; and, in short, of every Word that favours of a *corrupt Heart*, of a Heart *void of the Fear of God*. On the contrary, *Our Speech should be alway with Grace, seasoned with Salt*, as it is said, *Col. 4. 6. Verse* : That is to say, " Whatever we are talking of, (whether it be a *serious, or* " *jocular, or worldly matter*) we should endeavour so to " *Speak*, as that it may appear to others, that we have a constant Care of our Words, and are afraid of speaking any thing amiss ; endeavouring, at all times, rather to profit, than to prejudice, any Person by our Discourse.

To this end, we should speak always the Words of *Truth and Soberness*, of *Gravity and Sincerity* ; and when we are cheerfully dispos'd, never to be *profane or scurrilous* : Taking heed that no corrupt Communication proceed out of our Mouths, but rather that which is good, to the Use of Edifying, that it may minister Grace unto (the Use of) the Hearers, *Eph. 4. 29.* And, in so doing, we shall likewise make the Ways of our Tongues *pleasing unto God*.

[3] The like (if not a greater) Care should be taken of our Deeds and Actions : That nothing be done by us that is forbidden by the Law of God ; but every thing (as far as we are able) that is required of us, and enjoined us therein ; making it, at all Times, and in all Things, the Rule of our *Life and Practice*.

To this End, it is incumbent on us, to make Conscience of keeping and observing both Tables of the Law of God ; *i. e.* of performing our several Duties towards God, and towards our Neighbour also. What these Duties are, we are excellently well taught in our Church Catechism, and in few words, *viz.* First, That towards God, our Duty is : *To Believe in him, to Fear him, and to Love him with all our Heart, with all our Mind, with all our Soul, and with all our Strength : To worship him, to give him thanks, (i. e. for every Blessing and Benefit which he bestoweth on us) to put our whole Trust in him, to call upon him, to honour his holy Name and his holy Word, and to serve him truly (i. e. in Sincerity) all the Days of our Life.* Secondly, That towards our Neighbour, our Duty is : *To love him as our selves, and to do to all Men as we would that they should do unto us. To love, honour and succour our Parents. To honour and obey the Queen, and all that are put in Authority under her. To submit our selves to all our Governours, Teachers, spiritual Pastors and Masters. To order our selves lowly and reverently to all our Betters. To hurt no Body by Word or Deed. To be true and just in all our Dealings. To bear no Malice nor Hatred in our Hearts. To keep our Hands from Picking and Stealing ; and our Tongues from Evil-speaking, Lying and Slandering, (as before advised.) Again ; To keep our Bodies in Temperance, Sobriety and Chastity. And finally, Not to desire, nor covet, other Mens Goods ; but to learn and labour truly to get our own Living ; and to do our Duty in that State of Life unto which it pleaseth God to call us.*

This is an Abstract of the whole Moral Law ; and it doth contain the Sum of our Duties towards God and our Neighbour ; yea, and towards our Selves, in several Instances. Wherefore, that all our Ways (*i. e.* the Ways of our Hearts,

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and the Ways of our Tongue, and the the Ways of our Hand (I mean our Actions) may be pleasing unto God; it behoveth us to make Conscience of all the aforesaid Duties; and not live in a wilful Neglect of, or Contradiction to, any of them. And this brings me to the

Third Branch of my Method, that is, To shew that the making of our Ways thus pleasing unto God, is the most effectual Course that we can take, to obtain a good and safe Peace with our Enemies. Now, it will be the less needful to be long in the proof of this, because it is so expressly taught us in my Text: For the words thereof are a Promise of Peace to such as make their Ways pleasing unto God. Therefore, if we do our part, we have all the Reason in the World to believe that God will do his part: For he is a God of infinite Truth and Veracity; a God that cannot lie, Titus 1. 2. and never fails of being as good as his Word; but is so in all Cases.

But this is further confirmed, by the constant Course of God's Dealings with his own chosen People in old Time; I mean the *Israelites*. All that have read the History thereof, as set down in Holy Writ, with Attention, must have observed, That when they *provoked God to Anger* (as they did too often) by Idolatry, and other abominable Practices; then God proclaimed War against them, and stirred them up many Enemies to fight with them. But when they *repented*, and *turned from the Evil of their Doings*, and made their *Ways pleasing unto God*; then he soon subdued their Enemies under them; and gave them Peace, and Rest, and Quietness in their Land.

Many Instances and Examples of this Nature might be given out of the Holy Scriptures; but, that I may not be too tedious, I shall only take Notice of one or two. First, of that which is said in the Song of *Deborah and Barak, Judg. 5. 8.* How that, when they *chose new Gods*, there was *War in the Gates*: But (as it is in the preceding Verse) when *Deborah arose a Mother in Israel*, (or to Israel) which Title she could not well deserve, unless she had, not only defended them against their Enemies, but also promoted the true Religion, and Reformation among them, which must

therefore be presumed that He did, tho' I do not find it express, after that, it is said, *that the Land had Rest Forty Years.*

To like purpose, we find it written, *2 Chron. 15.* at the beginning: *That in the Days of Asa, the Spirit of the Lord came upon Azariah, the Son of Oded. And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him: Hear ye me Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; the Lord is with you, while ye be with him: and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.* Then follows an Account of the State and Behaviour of that People. Now, for a Season, Israel had been without the true God, and without a teaching Priest, and without Law. Which Account shews, that they were greatly depraved and corrupted in point of Religion, and likewise in their Morals: Wherefore, certainly, their Wars could not but be highly displeasing unto God. The Issue whereof you may see in the 5th and 6th Verses, where it is said: *And in those Times there was no Peace, to him that went out, nor to him that came in; but great Vexations were upon all the Inhabitants of the Countries. And Nation was destroyed of Nation, and City of City. For God did vex them with all Adversity.*

This was the Fruit of their Sins; they displeased God with their Evil Ways, and He vex'd them with the evils of War, and want of Peace. But mark now what followed upon a change of their Manners and Behaviour. 'Tis said, Verse the 4th, *That when in their Trouble they did turn unto the Lord their God, (the God of Israel) and sought him, he was found of them.* And in the following Verses, from the 7th to the 16th, we read, how that *Asa took courage, and put away all the abominable Idols out of Judah and Benjamin; and gathered the People together, and obliged them to enter into a Covenant, to seek the Lord God of their Fathers with all their Heart, and all their Soul, Ver. 14.* A part of which Covenant also was, *That whoever did otherwise, should be put to Death.* To all which the People giving their Consent, and swearing with a loud Voice to perform it, it is added, *that the Lord was found of them: and the Lord gaveth them Rest (i. e. Peace with all their Enemies) round about, Ver. 15.*

Thus

Thus you see it here plainly recorded, for the instruction of Posterity, that the *Israelites* Wickedness brought upon them the Judgment of War, and all manner of Adversity. And that when they Repented, and made their Ways pleasing unto God, he gave them Peace.

And therefore, since God is evermore the same, and his Dealings are usually alike with all People, according as they behave themselves well, or ill, in his sight: Nothing more needs to be said, to prove, that the best course we can take at present to have Peace with our Enemies, is to make our Ways pleasing unto God; that is, by making them conformable to his Will and Laws; (as before shewn) which we should labour and endeavour to do.

Fourthly, For two other Special Reasons, which I promised to give you, *viz.*

I. Because, if by reason of our National Sins, and for want of a National Repentance and Amendment, we should be denied the Blessing of Peace, even now, and when we are in great Hope and Expectation thereof, and be longer punished with the Judgment of War: Yet, as many of us as do labour heartily to make our own Ways pleasing unto God, and thereby to seek his Favour; we may, and shall, have this comfortable Reflection from our so doing, *viz.* That we have done our part towards the saving of a sinful Land and Nation; and as much as in us lies, to put an End to War, and obtain Peace, and prevent other Judgments. So shall we likewise take a right Course to be blest with inward Peace (I mean Peace of Conscience, which is the most valuable) whatever becomes of that which is outward, and now ought after. We are indeed told, that there is great Hope and Likelihood of obtaining it; and that the Enemy is inclined to be at Peace with us: But I doubt the Event is not so very sure, as that we may absolutely depend upon it. For the Heart of Man is deceitful; and God can turn the Wisdom of the wisest Men (as he did *Achitophel's*) into Foolishness. He can frustrate the best-laid Designs and Projects of Men, and bring them all to nought.

Wherefore, the best way is, not to be too confident and secure in our own minds; or to reckon our selves past Danger.

ger: But to be endeavouring to make God our Friend, (which he will not be, unless we make our Ways pleasing unto him) and then we may hope for his Favour, and such other Blessings as he sees to be fit for us, and we for them: Tho' we have not that particular Blessing which is so much wanted, and desired by us.

2. Another special Reason, and in truth the greatest of any, why we should labour (*totis viribus*) with all our Might and Power to make our Ways pleasing unto God, is, Because by this means (whatever becomes of us, or of our Affairs in this World) we shall secure our greatest Interest: I mean, the Salvation of our precious and immortal Souls.

If every thing went according to our Desires in this world; if we had Peace and Plenty, and Riches and Honour, in great abundance; and the aforesaid precious Parts of our selves (I mean our Souls) were still in hazard of Eternal Perdition; what would the aforesaid Things avail us? Yea, as our Saviour saith, *What would it profit any of us to gain the whole World, and to lose his own Soul?* Surely, this would be so far from being *advantageous* to us, that it would be the greatest *Loss* and *Detriment* that could befall any one among us.

Now, how can any one reasonably expect to be *happy* (yea, to be otherwise than *miserable* to all Eternity) in the World to come, who hath no Care of his *Ways*, so as to make them pleasing unto God in this World?

Certainly, if any Man doth so *expect* or *hope*, he must be one that doth not believe a word of the *Scriptures*; for they teach him to expect quite contrary things, and tell him, in the plainest words, That *whilst his Ways are displeasing to God, he can look for no better than Hell and Damnation.*

Lastly, I come now to make some *Application* of what hath been said on the Second Point of *Doctrine*.

1. We learn thence, where to lay the chief Blame of so long a War, and whence it is that Peace hath not been obtained e're now. It is not because God could not have fully subdued our Enemies, and forced them to Peace; or have inclined their Hearts sooner (if they are yet sincerely inclined) to be willing and desirous of Peace: But we have reason

son to fear, that the true Cause hereof is from our selves: That we had angered God by our Sins, which provoked him at first to punish us with the Judgment of *War*: And that, altho' we have suffered much thereby, yet, we have not (at least not so generally as we should) made it our Business to turn unto God by Repentance, and to amend our *Ways* and our *Doings*, so as that God might be pleased with us and them; and turn away his Anger from us.

Hear, I pray, and observe, what God himself saith to this purpose: *O that my People had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my Ways: For then I should soon have subdued their Enemies, and have turned my Hand against their Adversaries.* Ps. 81. 13, 14.

The Reason here given by God himself, why he had not subdued the Enemies of *Israel* much sooner than he did, was because *Israel* refused to hearken unto God, and to walk in his Ways. Which implies that their Ways were displeasing unto him. And may we not think, or suspect, the same of our Selves and our Ways? That we and they have been sinful and evil? And thence it is that our Enemies have held it out so long against us, and have not been obliged much sooner to submit to such Terms, as may be necessary to prevent their doing us greater Injuries and Mischiefs in time to come, than they have ever yet been able to do. This is certainly owing (chiefly and principally) to our Sins against God, and our manifold Transgressions of his Holy and Righteous Laws. Whence it follows,

2. That, by the aforesaid Doctrine, we may the better judge, whether we can (at present) have any reasonable view or prospect of a speedy and safe Peace with our Enemies.

It we can believe, or think, that we have made (or are now making) our Ways *pleasing unto God*; that we have *truly repented* (or are now repenting) of our *past Sins against God*; and are *resolved*, in good earnest, to *fear God* and *keep his Commandments*, better than we have ever yet done; then indeed we may reasonably Hope for such a Peace.

But if, on the contrary, it doth appear (as I doubt upon a narrow search it would) that, while God's Judgments have been upon us, we have refused to *learn Righteousness*, Isa.

26. b. If, in the midst of a *long and cruel War*, (which hath greatly impoverished us; and therefore, if for no other reason, should have humbled us) we have waxed Proud and Wanton, and exceeded in Vanities; If after our being brought (but a few Years since) to the very Brink of Ruine, by our *intestine Divisions, Feuds and Animosities* one against another; and being then saved, as it were, by a Miracle of Providence, we are as much divided as ever; and (instead of *Love, and Kindness, and Charity*) *Malice, and Hatred, and Ill-will*, have rather increased than decreased among us. In a word; If after all the loud Calls that God hath given us to Repentance, and the many Warnings that we have had to *turn from the Evil of our Ways*, we are as *bad*, if not *worse* than ever: If this be our Case, (as I fear it is in too great a degree) what *good Thing* can we reasonably expect, and look for?

If the Sins of *Drunkenness, and Swearing, and Cursing, and fornication*, and other like Abominations, are as rife and common as ever; *shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord? Shall not my Soul be avenged on such a Nation as this?* Jer. 9. 9.

True it is, that God is infinitely *good and gracious*, and his tender Mercies are over all his Works; (which is our only Comfort, and Ground of Hope) and thence it is that he hath often dealt with us much better than we deserved; sparing us, and delivering us from many and great Evils, and doing us much good, when our Sins cry'd aloud against us, and called for Punishment.

But can we reasonably hope that God will always deal thus mercifully with us? That he will never shew himself in Wrath and Vengeance, tho' we are still incorrigible? Surely, there is a time when God's Patience will be at an end: I mean, that it will cease to be exercised towards such obstinate Offenders. And I leave it to your own Consciences to judge (*i. e.* from a Consideration of our own, past and present, Behaviour in the sight of God; and especially of our great Ingratitude towards him for his former Blessings and Benefits bestowed on us) whether we have not some Cause (yea, no small Cause) to fear that the aforesaid time

is near at hand. We may flatter our selves with the Hope of better things, and fancy that God is now doing for us that which we chiefly desire; and I heartily wish, and pray, that the Event may be according to our Desires: But, at the same time, we must needs say and confess, that our own Ways and Doings cannot give us any reasonable View or Prospect thereof; but rather the contrary. Wherefore,

Lastly. That our Hope thereof may be better grounded than it seems to be at present, (notwithstanding the outward Appearance of Things) let us take the only *right Course*, and do our *own part* towards it: [*i. e.*] By making our own Ways *pleasing unto God*. For then he will certainly *cause our Enemies to be at Peace with us*.

To this End therefore, *Let us search and try our Ways, and turn again unto the Lord.* Lam. 3. 40. In the first place, let us be *serious and sincere* in Examining the State of our Hearts, and the Nature of our Actions, and see if we can find out what is, or hath been, amiss in either of them; wherein we have displeas'd Almighty God, by walking contrary to his *holy and righteous Laws*: Which being discovered, Let us then (*2dly*) Repent *truly and sincerely* thereof, and, as it is said, Matt. 3. 8. *Bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance*: [*i. e.*] By amending our Ways and our Doings, in every thing that is out of Order, and contrary to true Godliness. For, if we do not so, [*i. e.*] If we do not *bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance*; if we are not chang'd in Heart, and do not turn from *Sin to God*; we can never be said, or thought, to be *true Penitents*: Yea, tho' we *fast and pray, and mourn and weep*, and make an outward Shew of the *greatest Grief and Sorrow* for our Sins.

Wherefore, the *principle thing* we have to do, is, *To cease to do Evil, and learn to do Well*. The *Drunkard* to lay aside his *beastly Practice*, and to be *sober and temperate* in all things. The *Fornicator* to subdue his *fleshly Lusts*, and to become *truly chaste and virtuous*. The *Vain-Swearer* to bear an *Oath*. The *Malicious Person* to *wish well* to every one. The *Envious Man* to *rejoice* in the Prosperity of others. And every one of us to lay aside our respective Sins and

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and evil Habits, and every Iniquity that we have formerly been accustomed to; and to practice the opposite *Duties* and *Virtues*.

And, when we have thus reformed our Lives, and amended our Ways, and are turn'd in Heart, from the Love of *Vice*, to a sincere Love of *Virtue*: Then (but not before) we may reasonably hope, (having many divine Promises to build our *Hope* upon) that God is reconciled unto us, and hath actually pardoned our past Transgressions. And that, since we take such Care, and do our Endeavours to make our *Ways* pleasing unto God, he will make our *Enemies* to be at Peace with us.

Or, (if the Time be not fully come for such a Blessing) That God will still be our *Protector* and *Defender*, and take such further Care of us, as that they shall not be able to do us any great *Hurt*, or *Harm*; 'till he see fit to put an End to *War*, and to give us *Peace*, *Rest* and *Quietness*, from all our *Enemies* round about.

Which *Mercies* and *Blessings*, and whatever else he seeth to be *needful* for us, GOD, of his *Infinite Bounty* and *Goodness*, grant us, for the *alone Sake* of his well-beloved Son, and our *alone Redeemer*, **JESUS CHRIST** the righteous,

To whom, with the Father and blessed Spirit of Grace
Three Persons and one God, be ascribed of Us, and of
all Men and Angels, All Honour, Power, Praise
and Dominion, Now and for Evermore. A M E N

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